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A beautiful gift

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On Sunday, Jan. 14 from 3-5 p.m., the community is invited to come see the newest addition to our Staenberg Kooper Fellman Campus. The Milton Mendel and Marsha Kleinberg Jewish Omaha Heritage Center will officially open, and we can't wait!

"Much has changed in recent years," Bob Goldberg said, "but the Kleinberg Heritage Center might be one of the most exciting things this community has been given. We are so grateful to Milton and Marsha for this beautiful gift. It's a wonderful way to keep telling the stories of Jewish Omaha."

Event chairs Gloria Kaslow and Margo Riekes have contributed many hours to making this a success. Margo became involved with the project because the Riekes Museum, formerly located by the JCC's front entrance and endowed by Dorothy and Henry Riekes, was dismantled when the renovation of the JCC began several years ago.

"Our family pursued the idea that it should become part of the new museum," Margo said. "We collaborated with the museum developers to find the best way to incorporate its essential features. Although its new rendition is not an actual synagogue that can be used for a prayer service, people will see a replica of what an old Orthodox Omaha synagogue "shul" looked like during the late 1800s and early 1900s. After writing explanations of the artifacts that were to be displayed, I volunteered to help write the texts for other exhibits in the Kleinberg Hall of history. I learned a great deal from researching and working with the committee tasked with this amazing and worthwhile endeavor!"

Gloria was equally eager to volunteer her time and talents.

"When I heard that Milt and Marsha Kleinberg generously donated to the JCC renovation campaign for a museum, I immediately thought Scott Littky and I, both representing the Institute for Holocaust Education, should participate in the research and writing. Later in the process, I became hooked and wanted to participate in the entire project."

"I am most excited that the museum will be a permanent and educational part of our spectacular Jewish Community Center," Margo added. "It's the 'frosting on the cake'! Thanks to Milton and Marsha Kleinberg's generosity and the incredible work done by the Jewish Federation of Omaha, its staff, volunteers and the professional designers, the Omaha Jewish community will have a unique space devoted to the history of Jewish Omaha – a history we can all be very proud of!"

Gloria agreed: "This is such an exciting addition to our renovated campus, located right off the central lobby of the front entrance. All who come into the building can either peruse or

study in-depth the long history of Jewish Omaha and its role in shaping the community and city's culture and heritage. The museum traces the Jewish community's journey from its early roots to its present-day accomplishments. Visitors can explore

survivors rebuilt their lives and made important contributions to the rich tapestry of Omaha's Jewish community."

A few months ago, Milton and Marsha, accompanied by family members visiting from Israel, visited the space. While still unfinished at the time, it was easy to imagine the final product.

"We have six grandchildren and 17 great-grandchildren," Marsha and Milton said. "It's a constant reminder of how important it is to keep telling the story."

That story, Marsha said, was an important part of making Omaha their home.

"Milt connected by playing handball," Marsha said. "I, on the other hand, was always amazed at seeing the photographs of community members. Whenever I visited the JCC, it was those photographs that gave the building warmth. As an outsider, that was something visual that meant a lot to me, and I want to pass that on. This is a wonderful Jewish community; we must tell our stories."

"The members of our Jewish community should be blown away when they walk through the museum," Margo said, "and learn about Jewish Omaha - from the time of its first Jewish settlers in 1856 when the city was founded; the development of our Jewish community, its institutions and organizations; and the numerous extraordinary Omaha Jews who made major contributions to this Jewish Community, to Omaha, to the United States and to the world. It's truly remarkable that a relatively small group of people could have created such a beautiful legacy to pass on to future generations of Omaha Jews and to also be able to share this history with others."

Gloria said: "For me, one of the exciting aspects of the museum's features is its ability to expand and expound on what it offers. Like many new museums, the Kleinberg Hall of History isn't just a static display of photos and text. Each area will have a digital screen that provides additional information and that can continually add more information and up-to-date material. We hope that the museum will appeal to all generations. Some people will see their own families' contributions to the history of our community and others will be

learning the history for the first time. Younger generations can learn from the experiences of their ancestors, the struggles they overcame, and the successes they achieved. Hopefully, all who visit will be reminded that history is not just a thing of the past; it's a living, breathing force that shapes our present and future. We hope the Kleinberg Hall of History provides a platform for intergenerational conversations and a source of inspiration."

Please watch your mail for the event postcard, which will include the link to RSVP. We look forward to seeing you **Jan. 14** from **3-5 p.m.**, for kosher hors d'oeuvres and drinks. And, considering the time of year, we will have valet parking available!



Above: Marsha and Milton Kleinberg and **below:** Granddaughter Maayan, her husband David Machness and their children visited Marsha and Milton from Israel earlier this year.



stories of Jewish immigrants who arrived in Omaha, the establishment of synagogues and other institutions, religious life, and the countless individuals who have made indelible marks in various fields."

Milt Kleinberg, as a Holocaust survivor, is an excellent example of resilience, perseverance, and success, Gloria added. "Along with Milt's unique survival story, there are many other survivor stories in our community, all important to share and preserve. The museum is an excellent place to tell these stories, not only as a stark reminder of the consequences of hatred, prejudice, and discrimination, but also to highlight the incredible resilience and strength of the human spirit. The sur-